(a) the total number of Judges of High Courts in the country; State-wise till March 31, 1988;

(b) the number of Judges of High Courts belonging to Scheduled Castes and minorities till March 31, 1988 and

(c) the total number of vacancies of Judges of High Courts till March 31, 1988 and by when these vacancies are likely to be filled up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI HANS RAJ BHARDWAJ): (a) and (c) A statement showing the sanctioned strength, actual strength and vacncies of Judges in High Courts as on 31.3.88 is attached [*See* Appendix CXLVI, Annexure No. 40.] Selection of Judges involves deliberation in consultation with the concerned constitutional authorities and is a continuous process. Government makes all possible efforts to ensure that vacancies of Judges are filled in expeditiously. It is not possible to indicate any definite time by which these vacancies will be filled.

(b) Information regarding caste or community is not asked for at the time of making appointments. However, according to the information received from Registries of High Courts, as on 1.11.87, there were 6 Judges belonging to scheduled castes and as on 1.11.86, there were 34 Judges belonging to minorities in various High Courts of the country.

1034. [*Transferred to the 10th May*, 1988.]

Fire in Ordinance Depot at Jabalpur

1035. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO:

SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that very recently Artillery ammunition worth several crores of rupees was destroyed in a fire which broke out in the three magazines of the Central Ordnance Depot at Khamaria near Jabalpur;

(b) if so, what did the investigations in this regard reveal about the cause of the fire;

(c) what are the estimated losses in the fire that broke out;

(d) to what extent did the fire accident cause damage to the underground Air-conditioned platform magazine; and

(e) what steps Government propose to take to prevent such accidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) and (c) The loss of ammunition due to fire in two Magazines of COD, Jabalpur has been provisionally estimated at Rs. 19 crores.

(b) The Staff Court of Inquiry ordered for the purpose is in progress.

(d) This will be known only after the Staff Court of Inquiry has submitted its report.

(e) Instructions have been issued to intensify vigilance and for enhancing fire fighting capabilities.

Delay in Appointing Chief Executives of Public Sector Undertaking

1036. SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that 23 public sector undertakings are without full time Chairmen and or managing directors as on 30th April, 1988;

(b) what is the number of undertakings for which the P.E.S.B. has already made recommendations and what is the number of undertakings where appointments of chairmen/managing directors are pending for clearnce of the appointment committee of the cabinet (ACC); and

(c) where does the main delay occurs at the Public Enterprise Selection Board level or at the A.C.C. level or elsewhere and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) According to the available information there were 26 posts of chief executives in central public enterprises vacant as on 30th April, 1988. This does not include the posts of chief executives which are kept in abeyance or which are newly created ones where the PESB is yet to make its recommendations.

(b) The Public Enterprises Selection Board have made their recommendations for 21 posts out of 26. Based on the recommendations of the PESB, administrative ministries concerned with the public sector enterprises formulate proposals for making appointment to the posts of chief executives of public sector enterprises for being placed before the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet for its consideration. Government have since cleared proposals in respect of two recommendations made by the P.E.S.B. The remaining are under process with the administrative ministry/department concerned with the respective public sector enterprises.

(d) Guidelines have been laid down for following a time-frame for dealing with the proposals which are processed on the basis of the recommendations of the P.E.S.B. There is at times delay in appointing chief executives in public sector units The reasons for delay are due to the fact that the selections for posts are to be made by the PESB after following the prescribed procedure and the Board's recommendations are to be processed by the administrative Ministry/Department concerned with the public sector enterprise and the final appointments are made only with the approval of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet. Further, appointments can be made only after getting vigilance clearance verification of character and antecedents of individuals prior to their appointments and complete other formalities. In certain cases, persons with specialised skills are to be spotted through Press which take time. At times delay also occurs where persons selected take time or fail to join.

Setting up of biotech based industries

1037. SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the transnational corporations governed by the FERA have been permitted by Government to set up biotech based industries;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) the details of monitoring and regulatory mechanism which have been set up to ensure its safe development;

(d) what are the details of products for which permission has been granted to Hoechst, Pfizer, Infor India and E. Merck; and

(e) whether Indian industries have been accorded such permission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND